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65. An *amīr* between Umayyads and Abbasids: A Note on *P. KRU*70

(L. BERKES – J. A. CROMWELL)

The Theban legal document *P. KRU* 70.3–5⁽³⁴⁾ dated to 4 July 750 contains the testament written in Coptic of a woman of Djeme called Tbabes. What concerns us here is the remarkable prescript of the document written in Greek. After the bilingual protocol, the prescript comprises the invocation and a date by the day of the month and the indiction year followed by an eponymous dating according to the ‘*amīr* of the pagarchy of Hermonthis, the Three Castra, Contra Latopolis, and Djeme’ and also the *dioiketes* of Djeme. The *editio princeps* reads:⁽³⁵⁾

+ ἐν ὀνόματι τῆς ἁγίας καὶ ζωοποιοῦ ὁμοουσίου τριάδος πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ(ῶ)
καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος. ἐγρά(φη) μ(ηνὸς) Ἑπίφ ι, ἰ(ν)δ(ικτίωνος) γ
Φλαυ(ίου) Ἰωσήφ υ(ἰ)ο(ῶ) Ἀβιεῖδ εὐκ(λεεστάτου) ἀμῖρᾶ παγαρχίας Ἑρμόνθεως καὶ
Τρίων Κάστρο(ν)
καὶ Κονδρολάτων καὶ κάστρ(ου) Μεμνίων ἐπὶ τιμιωτ(άτου) κόμες Χαῆλ διοικ(η)τ(οῦ)
5 κάστρ(ου) Μεμνωνίων ἔτ(ου)ς Σαρακείνων ρλβ (καὶ) ἔτ(ου)ς Διοκλη(τιανοῦ) υξς

– Insert fig. –

‘+ In the name of the Holy, life-giving, and consubstantial Trinity, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. It was written on the 10th of Epeiph of the 3rd indiction.

(Under?) Flavius Ioseph s.o. Abieid (= Yūsuf b. ‘Ubayd [?]), the most well famed *amīr* of the pagarchy of Hermonthis, *Tria castra*, Contra Latopolis, and *castrum* Memnonion. Under the most esteemed *comes*, Chael, the *dioiketes* of *castrum* Memnonion. In the 132rd year of the Saracens and in the 466th year of Diocletian.’

This formula not only attests to the longevity of the usage of formulaic Greek even deep down in Upper Egypt, but provides valuable information on the administrative history of the region, which will be discussed in more detail elsewhere.⁽³⁶⁾ The description of the territories

³⁴ A German translation of the text was published by W. C. TILL, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen auf Grund der koptischen Urkunden* (Wien, 1954), pp. 185–188. On the date see W. C. Till, *Datierung und Prosopographie der koptischen Urkunden aus Theben* (Graz – Wien – Köln, 1962), p. 27. The Arabic protocol was published as *CPR* III 70, and the Greek prescript of the document was reprinted as *SBI* 5591.

³⁵ In contrast to the DDbDP, we resolve also the first name in the genitive, since – as part of the dating formula – the scribe probably intended a genitive and perhaps forgot to start with ἐπί, as is the case in the prescripts of *P. KRU* 12, 45, 50, and 106. We have not normalized the spelling.

³⁶ The significance of this prescript in the larger administrative context of the Theban region is discussed by J. A. CROMWELL, “Western Thebes and the Arab Administration of Pre-Abbasid Egypt,” *Christians and Muslims in Early Islamic Egypt: New Texts and Studies* (forthcoming). For the *dioiketes* of Djeme see most recently L. BERKES, *Dorfverwaltung und Dorfgemeinschaft in Ägypten von Diokletian zu den Abbasiden* (Wiesbaden, 2017), pp. 133–134 and 180–181.

controlled by the *amīr* is of considerable importance. Of specific interest here is the identity of the Muslim official: this is one of the few examples in which a Muslim seems to bear the honorific *gentilicium* Flavius.⁽³⁷⁾ The name itself of the official is also interesting *prima facie*: Ἰωσήφ does not seem to be an Arab spelling for Yūsuf. However, examination of the papyrus reveals that there is no need for further speculation on what implications this spelling may have. We read in l. 3:

Φλαυίω (l. Φλαυίου) Σικερ υἱο(ῦ) Αβιεῖδ εὐκλ(εεστάτου) ἀμῖρᾱ παραρχίας Ἑρμόνθεως
καὶ Τρίων Κάστρου (l. Κάστρον)

The *editio princeps* read -ιω- as the beginning of the name, producing an unusual abbreviated writing of Φλαυίου, and then attempted to make sense of the following cramped letters. The kappa seems to have been corrected from another letter and the gap between its vertical stem and limbs produces a strange form. After kappa, what the *editio princeps* read as phi is an epsilon-rho ligature. The reading of the name is therefore Σικερ not Ἰωσήφ.⁽³⁸⁾ Accordingly, the name of the *amīr* seems to have been Šukayr b. ‘Ubayd. Although the spelling Σικερ is strange, we have not been able to find any alternative for the interpretation of the name.⁽³⁹⁾ However, Αβιεῖδ for ‘Ubayd shows that the spelling of Arabic names by the scribe was idiosyncratic.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Šukayr b. ‘Ubayd was in office during turbulent times. In the summer of 750, Abbasid troops entered Fustāṭ and in August the last Umayyad calif, Marwān II was killed with his followers in Būṣīr.⁴¹ Since *P. KRU 70* is the only document attesting Šukayr, we do not know how he was affected by the regime change, but – as always in papyrology – new documents may provide insights in the future.

³⁷ The other two are Flavius Atias (‘Aṭiyya b. Ju‘ayd) pagarch of the Arsinoite and later *dux* of the Thebaid from the turn of the 7-8th c. and Flavius Saal (Sahl) another *amīr* and pagarch of Diospolis and Latopolis attested in two legal documents from Theban region in the years 724–725, see N. GONIS–F. MORELLI, “A Requisition for the ‘Commander of the Faithful’: SPP VIII 1052 Revised,” *ZPE* 132 (2000), pp. 193–195, esp. 194.

³⁸ As this papyrus is the only occurrence of a Yūsuf b. ‘Ubayd, this individual needs to be removed from discussions on Muslim officials and names, e.g., M. LEGENDRE, “Perméabilité linguistique et anthroponymique entre copte et arabe : L’exemple de comptes en caractères coptes du Fayoum fatimide,” *Coptica Argentorantensia: Conférences et documents de la 3^e université d’été en papyrologie copte (Strasbourg, 18–25 juillet 2010)* (Paris, 2014) pp. 325–440, here 403.

³⁹ The name occurs as Σουχῖρ in *P. Lond.* IV 1441.84 (Šukayr b. Muhāḡir). We would like to thank Nikolaos Gonis, Andreas Kaplony, and Naïm Vanthieghem for confirming our reading and identification of the name.

⁴⁰ On attested variations in Greek and Coptic texts of this name, see respectively A. KAPLONY, “The Orthography and Pronunciation of Arabic Names and Terms in the Greek Petra, Nessana, Qurra and Senouthios Letters (Sixth to Eighth Centuries CE),” *Mediterranean Language Review* 22 (2015), pp. 1–81, here 50 and M. LEGENDRE, “Perméabilité linguistique” [n. 5], p. 403.

⁴¹ H. KENNEDY, “Egypt as a Province in the Islamic Caliphate,” *Cambridge History of Egypt. Vol. I, Islamic Egypt, 640–1517* (Cambridge [i.a.], 1998), pp. 62–85, here 76.